

# "Er zog sich die 'neue Sprache' des 'Dritten Reiches' über wie ein Kleidungsstück": Communities of Practice and Performativity in National Socialist Discourse

Geraldine Horan (London)

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## Abstract

This article aims to provide new insights into the characteristics and use of National Socialist discourse. It discusses the methodological problems underlying the analysis of the topic and shows how previous research has resulted in a falsely polarised portrayal of the discourse and its creators and recipients. Applying the concepts of the 'community of practice' and 'performativity', taken from the study of language and gender, the article argues that discourse was not created by National Socialist ideologues and imposed upon the population, but instead was co-created and shaped by members of formal and informal groupings (communities of practice). Participation in these communities of practice enabled or coerced individuals to 'perform' their National Socialist identity to varying degrees and resulted in a discourse which was stylistically and communicatively adaptable and malleable.

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## 1 Introduction

The above quotation is taken from Gebauer's analysis of Adolf Eichmann's language use, in which he claims that Eichmann employed a hybrid style, containing elements typical of National Socialist language, combining bureaucratic and ideological vocabulary (Gebauer 2000: 342).<sup>1</sup> Eichmann's reproduction of elements of National Socialist discourse suggests a performance of National Socialist identity, one that he maintained, even during his trial in Jerusalem in 1961. The concept of NS discourse as a performance by an individual to signal his or her membership of a particular group or organisation has merited little attention. Indeed, previous research into the characteristics of discourse in the years 1933-45 has tended to portray the National Socialists and the general public in Germany as two distinct groups, with the former group as creators and disseminators of the discourse and the latter as recipients of it. NS discourse fulfilled a variety of organisational and ideological functions, providing the tools for organising and categorising the population, controlling and regulating its activities, establishing in- and outgroups, promoting the former and silencing the latter, creating (ideally) receptive, willing and engaged supporters, or at the very least a compliant population. But this did not occur as an automatic process, steered by the discourse alone: actors or participants were required in a variety of contexts to carry out the linguistic action.

In his analysis of letters to the *Kreisleitung Eisenach*, for example, the historian Connelly argues that members of the population "externalised" National Socialist ideology for their own purposes: "[t]hey may have not been believers, but they were participants." (Connelly

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<sup>1</sup> In likening Eichmann's adoption of NS rhetoric to putting on an item of clothing, Gebauer then adds "nur dass es ihm nicht passte" (342). He further describes Eichmann's language as "die Verschränkung und gegenseitige Durchdringung von Bürokratie und Nationalsozialismus. Dies ist die fürchterliche Mischung, die millionenfachen Mord ganz lapidar und relativ unverfänglich als Endlösung oder Statistik bezeichnet, als rechtens erklärt und klingt wie normale Sprache aus dem Mund normaler Bürger" (356).

1997: 182). In order to explore this "externalisation" from a linguistic perspective, new analytical frameworks are required that focus not only on reconstructing political, discursive and textual contexts, but also on the participants in National Socialism and on the social and pragmatic conditions which led to degrees of involvement in National Socialist discourse. For this purpose, I will draw upon the following concepts more commonly used in feminist sociolinguistics: Lave and Wenger's concept of the community of practice and the concept of performativity or "doing" a particular identity (in the sense of "performing" or "doing gender", for example) (see Cameron 1998: 270–284; Wodak 1997: 29–32; Kotthoff/Wodak 1997: x–xii; Coates 1996: 232–233). In drawing upon these concepts, I aim to show that rigid distinctions between *Sprache im/des National Sozialismus* and between the members of the NSDAP and the population are not valid. Instead, NS discourse should be regarded as a created and co-constructed phenomenon, involving various sections of the speech community. In this article, I will argue that participation in National Socialist discourse took place through membership of interlinking communities of practice, demanding various levels of loyalty and commitment. The degree of participation in these communities of practice was expressed through individual and collective 'performances' of National Socialist identity. I will argue that the production and reproduction of the discourse in these communities created a discourse which displayed both heterogeneous and homogeneous elements: heterogeneity as determined by speaker/writer, affiliation, text-type, homogeneity through performance of NS ideological discourse, themes, lexis. The analysis will refer to the following five texts (see Appendices):

App.1 Extract from report by Sister N N, outlining mental and behavioural status of young woman in the *Erziehungsheim H-H*, taken from files of the *Geheime Staatspolizei*, Düsseldorf, no date.

App.2 Letter to Herr S, confirming participation in saving scheme for a *Kraft-durch-Freude-Wagen (Volkswagen)*, 21 June 1936.

App.3 Letter to Frau P from the Oberpräsident der Provinz Hannover, requesting 'racial health' information about her and her family, 7 March 1939.

App.4 Thank-you letter from Frau L N to SS-Obersturmbannführer C, 11 February 1944.

App.5 Anonymous denunciation letter, taken from the Gestapo files, Düsseldorf, accusing two female neighbours of listening to English radio broadcasts, June 1944.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Linguistic background: approaches to analysing NS discourse

Over the past forty years, the methodological and socio-historical background to research on NS discourse has become a focus of study in its own right (Ehlich 1998). In order to illustrate how the analytical frameworks of communities of practice and performativity depart from previous approaches, I shall provide a brief outline of major developments in analyses of NS discourse.

### 2.1 Construction of a 'them-and-us' dichotomy in postwar linguistic analyses

Analysing the existence of communities of practice in the National Socialist speech community represents a departure from the perception of NS discourse as a separate code which was imposed upon the population by the *NSDAP*. It also involves a recognition that

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<sup>2</sup> Appendices 1 and 5 are taken from the files of the Geheime Staatspolizei, Düsseldorf, RW 58/97 and RW 58/52640, Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Düsseldorf; appendices 2 and 3 are from a private source; appendix 4 is from the files of the SS Lebensborn (Fa202), Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich. All names have been replaced by random initials. I have included English translations of the texts, and where necessary, have taken the translations of official and ideological terminology from Michael/Doerr (2002).

distinctions such as *Sprache des Nationalsozialismus* and *Sprache im Nationalsozialismus*, as identified by von Polenz, must be reconsidered. However, von Polenz's distinction between language produced by the NSAP since 1920 (*Sprache des*) and language use during the 1933-45 period, including that of the NSDAP and other strands of political language (*Sprache im*) must be understood in its historical context (von Polenz 1999: 547–548; Ehlich 1998: 279). Von Polenz's categories represent an attempt to move beyond the debate over whether one should refer to a *Sprache im* or *Sprache des Nationalsozialismus*, which can be traced back to the 1960s. Von Polenz's claim that both types existed highlights the heterogeneity of discourse in Germany from the 1920s to 1945 and points to a more differentiated understanding of styles, registers and group discourses in use at the time. What at first sight appears to be a minor discussion concerning the choice of a preposition, did in fact form the focal point of a fundamental debate on the interpretation of NS language use.

Early postwar studies on NS discourse, by Berning (1960-63, 1964), Klemperer (1966), Seidel/Seidel-Slotty (1961) and Sternberger/Storz/Süskind (1968), for example, attempted to identify an NS vocabulary in the sense of *Sprache des Nationalsozialismus* through focusing on key words and expressions associated with the NS regime, which von Polenz referred to as the "Einzelwortmethode" (von Polenz 1963). Sauer (1978) and Voigt (1974) criticised these works for compiling lists or dictionaries of NS words and expressions which gave the impression that there was a distinct and recognisable NS language, the existence of which Sauer and Voigt disputed. Kinne's analysis (1983) attempted to diffuse the debate over the meaning of *Sprache* as employed by Klemperer, Sternberger et al. and Seidel/Seidel-Slotty. Kinne claims that these early studies never maintained that a separate language was created, pointing to the polysemic use of the term *Sprache*, not restricted to referring to language in the sense of 'langue', but rather to denote group or specialist language use (Kinne 1983: 519; see also Bachem 1983: 75). Moreover, he states that in using the term *Sprache*, Klemperer, Sternberger et al. and Seidel/Seidel-Slotty in particular were not drawing attention to the singularity and peculiarity of NS language use. This viewpoint is problematic, though, as it belies the intention of these postwar studies, which were motivated by a perceived need to portray NS usage precisely as a distinct – and extinct – language, with an emphasis on its perceived strangeness and barbarity. Stötzel (1989: 37) states that the criticism of Berning, Klemperer and Sternberger et al. emanates from a misunderstanding of their work, which was not intended merely to compile lists of Nazi words, but rather to sensitise people to the existence of NS expressions and to prevent their continued usage. I would argue that these early studies formed part of a larger process, evident in postwar Germany. Not only did these studies identify NS language, highlighting its peculiarity and sensitising the public to its usage, they also represented a performance of rejection of NS ideology and discourse. As such, they formed part of the socio-psychological distancing process which dominated postwar German society, which entailed creating polarised categories of 'them' (the National Socialists) and 'us' (the non-NS population) as a misleading but effective tool for retrospective interpretation of actions and behaviour during the NS regime.

In linguistic terms, this interpretative framework meant that the general population could be conveniently absented from a central role in the creation of and participation in the discourse. This approach is reflected, for example, in Bachem (1979: 123), in which he claims that the German population did not perceive themselves as participants in the NS discourse, instead regarding it as a special political, administrative code. Ehlich (1989, 1998) also describes the population's sudden disengagement from National Socialist activities in the immediate postwar period.<sup>3</sup> Ehlich has addressed the question of participation in the NS regime through

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<sup>3</sup> "Jene 'Stunde Null' bewirkte vor allem eine erstaunliche Transformation von Mitgliedschaften. Hatten bis 1945 fast alle Deutschen irgendwie und irgendwo 'dazugehört', so jetzt kaum noch jemand [...] Kaum jemand hatte

an analysis of the pragmatic relationship between the National Socialist regime and the population. He describes the relationship as one based on the promise as a speech act and the realisation of the promise in the form of improved societal conditions (Ehlich 1998: 276–277). Maas (1984) also addresses participation in his analysis of the multiple reading and interpretations of National Socialist texts. What remains to be done, however, is an analysis of the motivations and involvement of speakers from a sociolinguistic perspective, which examines the role of interacting communities within the National Socialist regime, and the levels of official, semi-official and private communication in shaping the discourse.

## 2.2 Text-types and subjective analyses of NS discourse

Analysing NS discourse and its production and maintenance by the speech community is beset by a range of further methodological problems. Pre-existing attitudes toward primary material, judgements about levels and type of participation in NS discourse and previous subjective portrayals of NS usage all contribute to an already distorted understanding of the language use. Marek (1990: 471–473) argues that much of the research into NS usage is based on official texts, many intended for propaganda purposes, including speeches, or party documents including party programmes, circulars, language regulations, from which general conclusions are drawn about the lexis, style and syntax of NS discourse. The concentration on particular types of official texts is problematic, as it often tends to perpetuate the notion that NS discourse involved a one-way stream of communication from the NSDAP to the general population. Furthermore, it does not allow an assessment of the role of NS discourse in the wider speech community and in particular masks the large numbers of linguistic participants in the National Socialist regime (Connelly 1997, Dördelmann 1997, Wells 1999). The widespread participation is documented in the holdings of national, regional and local archives in Germany, which contain a variety of texts, for example, letters, telegrams, postcards, circulars, posters, pamphlets, books, magazine articles, lists, recipes, and so forth. If we regard official documents as representative texts of NS discourse, then it appears static, repetitive and more homogeneous than it was in practice. Any focus on the apparent immutability of the discourse proves useful if one wishes to characterise the regime as ideologically rigid and monolithic (Townson 1992: 127), but it also denies the effectiveness of the discourse, which through its users harnessed existing discourses and styles and disseminated and reproduced NS ideology through a variety of text-types and speech situations.

Previous evaluative analyses have focused on the perceived aesthetic characteristics of NS discourse. One of the weaknesses of early research on NS discourse in particular was that it described a rigid, monolithic language use, defined from the outset and unchanging throughout the NS regime. Seidel and Seidel-Slotty (1961: vii) claimed that: "[I]m Dritten Reich vollzog sich eine Umwandlung und Verschmelzung der Sprachstile in einen einzigen." Townson (1992: 130–135) emphasises the reliance of NS discourse on *Mein Kampf* and on its fixed and unchanging characteristics. Certain texts, particularly propaganda texts may show certain consistencies in lexical choice, resulting in a closed system, which reinforced the racial, discriminatory ideology at the heart of NS policies (Young/Gloning 2003: 302). However, political, social changes in the period from the early 1920s to 1945 brought about shifts in language used. This is seen, for example, in language used to promote women's activities before and after the outbreak of the war (Horan 2003: 34–35). The *Presseanweisungen* issued by the *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* also indicate changing attitudes to emphasis and acceptability of vocabulary in texts by the press (Townson 1992: 138–149, Glunk 1966–71). Analyses of NS discourse have a tendency

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etwas gewußt, kaum jemand hatte etwas gesehen, kaum jemand hatte an etwas teilgenommen, hatte etwas verantwortet, hatte etwas veranlaßt, befohlen oder gar: hatte etwas getan." (Ehlich 1998: 277).

to place value judgements on the discourse and describe its characteristics through the use of military metaphors, or metaphors denoting violence, for example, *Machtübernahme über die Sprache* (Bork 1970), *beschlagnahmen*, *unterwerfen* (Bergsdorf 1978), *Okkupation der Sprache* (Sauer 1978). Even von Polenz's use of the expression *semantische Besetzung* to refer to National Socialist use of key words denoting traditional 'core' concepts and values proves problematic in this context (von Polenz 1999: 550). Although one may regard aspects of the discourse as morally and ideologically repugnant, and aesthetically deficient, in focusing on its failings and weaknesses, one is denying its effectiveness, albeit short-term, in influencing linguistic behaviour in the society. Analyses which condemn the language use fail to acknowledge the fact that it may have resulted from a variety of motivations, not necessarily out of ideological agreement, and may have been a manifestation of the externalisation of NS ideology referred to by Connelly (1997). Ironically, despite apparent homogeneity due to regulation of public utterances, the speech community under National Socialism was in fact fragmented, consisting of a variety of groups and niches, with loyal, compliant, semi-compliant/-oppositional and oppositional discourses co-existing, even employed by the same individual or community of practice.

### 3 Communities of practice in National Socialism

As Sauer (1978), von Polenz (1999: 548) and Voigt (1974) have argued, there was no separate language of National Socialism and much of what is identified as NS rhetoric was not created by the National Socialists. The success of the discourse lay in its harnessing of various registers, styles, and group discourses, and in the presence of the discourse in everyday activities (Maas 1984). The politicisation of discourse on all levels, from the official to the everyday, brought about the normalisation of NS ideology and through a combination of the familiar and the new an acceptance or toleration of the discourse. The mutability of the discourse and its employment in a variety of formal and informal situations enabled and in some cases forced the individual to engage with it, to participate in its creation and to recreate it in a variety of contexts.

Using Lave and Wenger's model of the community of practice, we can interpret discourse in National Socialism as comprising of communication between different 'communities', voluntary and enforced, transitory and more permanent. The concept of the community of practice was developed to explain models of learning in everyday contexts (Lave/Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998) and is based on the premise that in a given society, individuals participate in a variety of groups defined by common interest and activity. Wenger explains that:

[w]e all belong to communities of practice. At home, at work, at school, in our hobbies – we belong to several communities of practice at any given time [...] Communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar. Although the term may be new, the experience is not. Most communities of practice do not have a name and do not issue membership cards [...] We have a fairly good idea of who belongs to our communities of practice and why, even though membership is rarely made explicit on a roster or checklist of qualifying criteria. Furthermore, we can probably distinguish a few communities of practice in which we are core members from a larger number of communities in which we have a more peripheral kind of membership. (Wenger 1998: 6–7)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See also Eckert/McConnell-Ginet (1995: 469): "During the course of their lives, people move into, out of, and through communities of practice, continually transforming identities, understandings, and worldviews [...] A single individual participates in a variety of communities of practice at any given time, and over time: the family, a friendship group, an athletic team, a church group."

According to Wenger, a community of practice coheres around three defining factors: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger 1998: 73). An individual can be regarded as belonging to multiple communities of practice, some discrete, some overlapping or even conflicting. The word 'practice' emphasises the everyday level of engagement which arises from circumstance and need. When applied to gender and language use, the purpose of the model is to enable an exploration of the complex and fluid nature of interaction and the types of communities in which identity and membership are defined by the members themselves rather than outside intervention. These communities also define an individual's social self and communicative routines, in which gender plays a lesser or greater role depending on the particular community of practice (see Eckert/McConnell-Ginet 1995: 469).

Under the National Socialist regime, the speech community can be regarded as belonging to a variety of community of practices, some directly involved in National Socialist activities, others in which National Socialist organisation played a more peripheral role. Of central importance is the understanding that a community of practice is not necessarily a positive model of empowerment for interaction: it may not necessarily be autonomous and self-governing, and conflicts and tensions may arise. However, even within such a restrictive and interventionist environment as the one created by the National Socialists, individual input nonetheless contributes to the community in which they operate:

[E]ven when the practice of a community is profoundly shaped by conditions outside the control of its members, its day-to-day reality is nevertheless produced by participants within the resources and constraints of their situations. It is their response to their conditions, and therefore *their* enterprise. (Wenger 1998: 79; italics in original)

Within the National Socialist speech community, there were definable professional, social and leisure organisations, with formal membership requirements, recognised external symbols and practices, for example, the *NSDAP* and organisations within it, including *NS-Lehrerbund*, the *Hitler-Jugend* and the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt*. However, within these organisations, externally and peripheral to them were communities of practice – individuals communicating with each other, motivated by the three factors of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. Those belonging to professional or leisure organisations which had existed prior to the establishment of the National Socialist regime and which were brought under National Socialist control through *Gleichschaltung* would have brought their practices and modes of communication, elements of their existing discourse with them, thus creating new types of NS discourse. Communities of practice are not static organisational and social constructs; they are influenced by external as well as internal developments, which can bring about shifts in status and prestige in a speech community. Prior to 1933, National Socialist discourse was one of many competing ideological discourses in society. Membership of NS communities of practice in the 1920s and early 1930s was voluntary, initiated by ideological beliefs and engagement in the perceived cause. From 1933 onwards, there ensued an increasing presence of NS ideological discourse in wider spheres and many found themselves becoming participants in NS organisations, willing or unwilling.

### 3.1 Homogeneity and heterogeneity in NS discourse through communities of practice

The differing backgrounds of members of NS communities of practice brought about degrees of heterogeneity in the discourse. Texts produced by women involved in National Socialism, for example, make use of language also found in texts emanating from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women's movements in Germany, as well as from pre-NS women's organisations which were incorporated into the *NSDAP* or dissolved, for example, the *Neulandbund* and the *Bund Königin Luise* (Horan 2003: 33–34, 43). The different levels of engagement also allowed, to a small extent, the possibility of negotiation of discourse between participants. Zabel's analysis of a speech by an *Ortsgruppenleiter*, for example,

illustrates differences in speeches concerning national matters, controlled by the *Reichspropagandaleitung* (Zabel 1987), evident through the use of rhetorical characteristics including the use of the collective singular (*der deutsche Mensch, der Jude*), the personification of Germany (*Seele der deutschen Nation, der deutsche Geist*), and through speeches concerning local matters, which contain a higher degree of individuality in style and lexis. Yet the discourse also incorporates homogeneous elements, in the sense that each text signals engagement with National Socialist ideology, for example, through the use of NS symbols, or lexically, through the use of identifiable key terms/expressions, or through the selection of theme or subject matter. There are texts which are immediately recognisable as official; with others the distinction between official/semi-official/personal is less clear. Through correspondence, a certain degree of interaction existed, resulting in an inter-relationship between official and semi-official texts and a constant creation and recreation of the discourse on a variety of levels.

The report by Sister N N in Appendix 1 illustrates the combination of discourses and styles available in NS communities of practice. The report documents the profile of a young woman's family background and perceived psychological problems and action taken. The report contains a mixture of specialist medical terminology, quoted from another source, for example *degenerativ-minderwertige* and informal language, more typical of spoken interaction, including *mannstoll, hat Klatschereien gemacht, äusserst frech, eine Backpfeife gegeben*. The text shows the author to be a member of a community practice in an *Erziehungsheim*, commenting on the social, behavioural and psychological characteristics of the individual described in the report. Membership of National Socialist community of practice is communicated through references to National Socialist policy, e.g. *Sterilisierung*, and through the merging of social, behavioural and medical categories to categorise an individual as 'worthy of life' or not. The text highlights the malleability of National Socialist discourse, as it is employed in a specific community of practice, with wider implications for individuals involved in other community of practices. In combining a variety of discourses, including ideological and specific, professional terminology, combined with everyday language, National Socialist discourse reached into all areas of activity and behaviour, in some cases, with sinister consequences.<sup>5</sup>

Participation in a National Socialist community of practice could also arise through desire for personal acquisition, as illustrated by the individual saving for a *Kraft-durch-Freude-Wagen*. (App.2).<sup>6</sup> This is an example of a community of practice which unites the personal and the ideological, highlighted through the phrase *Dein KdF-Wagen* (underlining GH). The community defined by mutual engagement, with the individual supporting the government scheme and subscribing to its ideologisation of the symbol of personal freedom and mobility. The scheme of saving for a *KdF* car also represents a joint enterprise, as the participant purchases stamps to contribute to the car and receives confirmation from the state that his participation is recognised. In the text in App.2, the saver is assigned an order number, and through a combination of warnings and encouragement, is spurred on to continue saving. The joint enterprise is characterised by mutual gain by the individual and the state, and indeed the individual feels himself to be part of a larger group striving for a shared outcome, i.e. to

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<sup>5</sup> So-called 'euthanasia' was carried out from 1938 onwards on children considered disabled; at the outbreak of war in 1939, Hitler extended this to adults, under the name *Aktion T4*. In August 1941, the programme was officially stopped, following protests led by the Protestant and Catholic churches, but was nonetheless continued in institutions for the mentally and physically disabled (Bedürftig 1997: 104).

<sup>6</sup> *Kraft durch Freude* (founded 1933) was part of the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* and organised leisure activities, including excursions and holidays, and from 1938 offered individuals the opportunity to purchase a car through a saving scheme. Although the scheme attracted 336 000 *Volkswagen* savers, none of them, including the holder of this particular *Sparkarte*, ever received a car (Bedürftig 1997: 361–362).

possess a car. The shared repertoire in this community is evident through the commonly accepted symbols (e.g. the illustration of the *KdF* car, depicted in motion, suggesting technological sophistication, speed, freedom and mobility), terminology *KdF-Wagen*, *Gaubestellnummer*, *Gauwagenwart* and practices associated with the scheme, i.e. purchasing the stamps and submitting them to the organisation.

In analysing membership of NS communities of practice, one should not restrict oneself to overtly active involvement: the role of recipient of the discourse also has an important contributory function. Even without regarding oneself as an active and supportive member of an NS community of practice, being the recipient of an official correspondence, for example, was not a passive activity. The recipient of the letter (App. 3) would have been drawn into a community of practice through the involvement of a family relative (in this example, a cousin committed to a psychiatric institution). Although the addressee may not have been aware of the full implications of providing the information requested, i.e. possibly being committed to an institution and/or sterilised, or even murdered (see footnote 5), she will have been aware that this information was central to the community of practice and its 'enterprise'. Familiarity with terminology such as *Sippe*, *erbbiologisch*, would also have been assumed. In reading and possibly replying to a letter, the addressee temporarily becomes part of the community of practice, is exposed to the discourse and engages with it, thereby ensuring its validity and continuity. As with the report in App. 1, the letter illustrates the hybridity of style and theme in NS discourse, with phrases typical of administrative register, for example, *Zwecks Erfassung der ...*, as well as inclusion of the request for the addressee's house number at the close of the letter. Even supplying such apparently innocuous information as one's full address in a reply represents engagement with a National Socialist community of practice, with potentially sinister consequences in this particular example.

### 3.2 Oppositional communities of practice

Through NS regulation of written and spoken utterances in the public sphere, it would seem that all communities of practice were adherent to NS ideology. However, oppositional communities of practice with subversive discourses existed nonetheless (Bauer 1987, 1990; Maas 1984: 145–164). Their activities were often understandably hidden and/or subtle and produced under the threat of discovery and reprisal, and there were instances of punishments meted out to those defying the dominant discourse (Townson 1992: 144–145). Indeed Bauer (1990: 10) claims that apparent stranglehold of NS discourse on public utterances masked the true extent of dissent, as people felt compelled to adapt themselves to the dominant discourse. There was an awareness amongst members of the speech community that adherence to the National Socialist state had to be communicated through certain expressions and phrases, including greetings (*Heil Hitler!*), titles, names of organisations, for example. The knowledge of the lexical and stylistic properties of NS discourse not only resulted in perpetuation and recreation of the discourse, it also led to a certain amount of lexical creativity and wordplay in oppositional communities of practice, seen in the creation of expressions such as *Hitlerschnitt* to refer to sterilisation (Bock 1984: 277), nicknames given to NS leaders, such as *Baldrian von Schmierach* or *Reichsjugendverführer*, mocking designations, such as *Klumpfußchens Märchenstunde* for Goebbels' radio broadcasts or manipulation of NS slogans: *Hitler verrecke*, *Proleten erwacht!* (Bauer 1990: 175). Oppositional or semi-oppositional communities of practice, consisting of like-minded family members, friends or acquaintances could participate in criticism of the NS state, creating a discourse which was based on the dominant discourse, but in fact undermined its authority and legitimacy. The creation of oppositional discourse was not a one-way process – it did impact upon loyal communities of practice, through exposure of critical and subversive discourse submitted to the Gestapo or to



other organisations by denunciators and through the punishments meted out to those engaging in oppositional discourse.

Although direct comparisons with language use in the GDR (German Democratic Republic) are for the most part unhelpful, there are certain similarities in the relationship between the population and the totalitarian regime in both instances, in particular the awareness amongst the population of the existence of a recognisable, powerful, dominant, public discourse. Recent research into language in the GDR have proved claims about code-switching by the population to be too simplistic, but it does seem likely that members of the speech community were able to adopt a range of registers according to particular context and type of interaction. More importantly, though, speakers have been shown to be aware of the needs for different styles and registers (Stevenson 2002: 188–194). It is likely that this sensitivity to adopt a particular register was similarly present under the National Socialist regime.

#### **4 Performativity and identity**

As stated above, in a context in which communicative situations may be governed by an oppressive power, the notion of performance of identities is particularly relevant. The presence of National Socialist ideology and policy in many communities of practice, combined with the awareness of the types of context in which expressions of loyalty or obedience were required, would have created the environment for individuals to stress their identity as National Socialists to greater and lesser degrees. The concept of performativity in discourse has arisen from research into gender and language which has striven to find analytical frameworks that do not rely on essentialist constructs of female and male language behaviour and categorise women either as oppressed and inadequate language users, or as culturally separate entities from men. The community of practice model attempts to show the constitutive nature of discourse, in highlighting the complex networks of social interaction and the way in which relationships are subject to negotiation and renegotiation. Gender, for example, may be a defining factor in group interaction, but it may manifest itself in diffuse ways, depending on the particular community of practice.

The concept of the performative nature of discourse is based on Judith Butler's thesis (1990: 173) that gender is not a pre-ordained category determined by biological sex. In discourse, performativity is an essential part of the process of creation and recreation of gendered identities in interaction, determined by autonomous action (Wodak 1997: 30–31; Kotthoff/Wodak 1997: x–xii). Therefore women and men can perform a range of identities, many of which manifest themselves as gendered. Linguists have highlighted problems with the concept, as it places emphasis on the individual and does not take into account external, social structures, including power and status, as well as type of interaction, which also shape and define the individual's discourse. Wodak (1997: 30) argues that we should regard dynamics of identity and power as being 'co-constructed'. However, I would argue that identity in its various manifestations can be both performed and co-constructed. In fact they are part of the same process: the type of performance depends upon context and interaction with others and therefore becomes 'co-constructed' in each situation. The relationship between performance and membership of a community of practice is a reciprocal one, as through performing an identity in linguistic realisation, one signals one's membership of a community of practice, but at the same time the practices, rituals and conventions of a community will also presuppose certain manifestations of a performance. The relationship is also part of an ongoing process, with identities being created and recreated within each community of practice, as Eckert/McConnell-Ginet (1995: 470) explain:

Language is a primary tool people use in constituting themselves and others as "kinds" of people in terms of which attributes, activities, and participation in social practice can be regulated [...] How people use language – matters of "style" that include grammar, word choice,

and pronunciation – is a very important component of self-constitution. How people talk expresses their affiliations with some and their distancing from others, their embrace of certain social practices and their rejection of others – their claim to membership (and to particular forms of membership) in certain communities and not others. And within communities of practice, the continual modification of common ways of speaking provides a touchstone for the process of construction of forms of group identity.

#### 4.1 Performance of NS identity: the 'Signalfunktion' of utterances and texts

Performing a particular identity through discourse stems from an individual's decision to respond to the communicative environment and engage with the dominant discourses. Thus, the 'performance' of a National Socialist identity is an expression of membership of a National Socialist community of practice. Each spoken or written text, in addition to its informative, descriptive, expressive and persuasive functions, also has what I have termed a *Signalfunktion*, in communicating adherence to National Socialist ideology and loyalty to the party or regime. Factors determining levels of performance include the eagerness to be part of the in-group, through circumstances bringing the individual into a community of practice which is either central or peripheral to the National Socialist state. For many, a minor performance of National Socialist identity was a necessary part of day-to-day existence, to secure an everyday existence free from intervention, to avoid being identified as oppositional in expression, to continue in activities, for example sporting or other leisure activities which were previously not under National Socialist control. The customary *Heil Hitler!* in spoken or written form, for example, may signal an ideologically adherent performance or a cursory engagement with the dominant forms of expression.<sup>7</sup>

The performance of National Socialist identity is as complex as the performance of any other aspects of an individual's identity and constitutes an integral part of social, political, professional, public, private modes of behaviour. A central feature of National Socialist ideology was to define a range of identities, e.g. as German, as mother, as soldier, as school pupil which were inseparable from National Socialist identity. Note here the assumed synonymy between "German" and "National Socialist", also between other positively connoted attributes such as "good", "honest", for example. Performance of NS identity could occur in a variety of individual and collective contexts. Ehlich (1989: 20), for example, outlines the effectiveness of the discourse in creating a rhetorical "Aura der Festlichkeit" in public events with mass participation and collective performance of National Socialist identity, which must have proved attractive to many. Such occasions would have provided the environment for a collective performance, in which the individual saw his or her performance accepted and encouraged through being mirrored by similar performances. Ehlich also attributes the success of fascist ideology to the emphasis on phatic communication in mass participation, with its emphasis on the promise, the *Befehl* and the encouragement of denunciation in controlling expression (1989: 21–25). Marches and rallies gave people the opportunity to listen and speak; through ritualised, collective responses, the audience had the impression that they were participating, despite the fact that this participation was carefully staged and intended to replace genuine engagement. Although Ehlich's focus on the central importance of mass rallies sheds light on the means for disseminating NS ideology and rhetoric and the attractiveness of participation for the population, his analysis is still based upon the flawed oppositional constructs of National Socialists on the one side and the

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<sup>7</sup> Bauer (1988: 118) describes how the greeting *Heil Hitler!* occurred in a variety of contexts and with varying degrees of conviction: "Die Begeisterung der täglichen Anrufung des 'Führers' und in einer gewissen Identifikation mit ihm muß in manchen öffentlichen Veranstaltungen, z.T. auch in privaten Situationen des Durchhaltens, der Selbstermahnung usw. bis zu hysterischen Zuständen geführt haben. Es kam vor, daß Frauen 'Heil Hitler!' während der Geburtswehen schriehen. Die kleinsten Kinder wurden schon darauf getrimmt." See also Bauer (1987).

population on the other. While this may be a convenient model for the analysis of mass rallies, it still maintains the notion of the population being fooled or bewitched by NS rhetoric with its empty promises of a "heile Welt". As such it does not provide an accurate reflection of the diversity of communication in the National Socialist regime, something which Ehlich (1989: 31) himself identifies in his analysis, in outlining the multiplicity of groups within the NS speech community, all in their own way contributing to the make-up of what he terms 'Sprache im Faschismus'. Even in contexts such as mass rallies, performance of NS identity through activities such as flag-waving, cheering and chanting of NS slogans represents a participatory process, in which the discourse is recreated and perpetuated.

#### 4.2 Letters written to NS officials: textual examples of performance of National Socialist identity

Letter-writing represents an obvious engagement with the National Socialist state and gave the letter writer the opportunity to perform the necessary identity. In writing to an official in the NS state, one was not engaging in a 'niche' activity, rather one was a member of a large community of practice. The historian Robert Gellately describes how

letter-writing to the 'authorities' became a much favoured form of citizen activity in Nazi Germany [...] Hitler's Chancellery, for example, received at least one thousand letters and petitions every working day, and according to the postwar testimony of one official there might have been twice that many. (Gellately 1997: 204).

Letters, postcards and telegrams of support were sent to Hitler and other leaders both before 1933 and throughout the regime. Although the motivations for penning the letters may differ, what they have in common is their desire to express their membership of the NS community of practice by articulating their enthusiasm for National Socialist leaders or NS ideology. They perform their National Socialist identity through a variety of pragmatic and lexical strategies, through opening greetings: *Hochgeehrter Führer und Volkskanzler!*; through statements expressing devotion to the leaders, National Socialism or to the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a whole, e.g., *Daß wir Frauen mit Leib und Leben für den Führer einzustehen bereit sind, braucht keiner Beteuerung*; through the inclusion of NS key expressions, for example, racial vocabulary such as *artgemäss*, *Rassenehre*, or military metaphors, e.g., *kampf- und opferbereit*, and through appropriate closing greetings: *Heil Deutschland! Heil Hitler!* It is somewhat ironic that these letters did not necessarily reach the intended addressee (letters addressed to Hitler, for example, were forwarded on to the *Reichsminister des Innern*), and replies were often short and visibly lacking in recognisable ideological key expressions to match those of the original correspondent.

The letter in App. 4 is an example of a performance of solidarity and loyalty with NS ideology. The status and connection of the author with the SS is unclear, although her political conviction is obvious. The text constitutes the performance of the ideal or perceived ideal National Socialist mother: "kinderreich" with three children; unstinting loyalty to the National Socialist cause; stoicism in the face of challenges and hardships of civilian life in wartime. The author combines the private and the ideological throughout – references are made to the gift from the *Reichsführer-SS* of the *Lebensleuchter* and six bottles of vitamin drink for her third child; an outline of her personal history is included, with mention of others' criticism of her becoming a young mother, and she includes a photograph of the children. The tone of the letter is relentlessly positive throughout. The letter contains ideologically-charged vocabulary, combining the topics of motherhood, children and the war: *Kriegeskind, ein gläubiges Herz, unsere Führung, der totale Krieg, den Führer und seine tapferen Soldaten, der Wille zum Kind, etwas Wertvolleres [...] gesunde Kinderschar*, and the closing greeting *Heil Hitler!* The author includes the quotation of a National Socialist slogan "*Alles für den Sieg*" to further emphasise her solidarity. Clearly, the letter represents more than a formal, standard thank-you

letter, and instead performs several identities which align themselves with National Socialist communities of practice, defined by gender, ideological belief, family circumstance and even geographical location (e.g. *der Wille zum Kind hier in Mecklenburg...*).

One particular unpleasant manifestation of performance of NS identity on the part of the general public is the denunciation letter (Wells 1999, Connelly 1997, Dördelmann 1997, Wells 1999). Research into the denunciation letter has highlighted the levels of interaction and participation in the National Socialist regime, with the population not consigned to a passive role as suggested in immediate postwar historical depictions (Connelly 1997: 154; Dördelmann 1997: 189–190; Wells 1999: 211–212). Denunciation letters reveal a complex interrelationship between the public and the private sphere and the personal and the political, and reveal how ideological, essentially 'public' discourse was harnessed for individual purposes. In these letters personal feuds and vendettas, for example, are manifested as expressions of loyalty to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The variety of motives for compiling a denunciation letter results in a mixture of registers, (similar to the characteristics identified in Gebauer's analysis of Eichmann's idiolectal usage or those evident in the report by Sister N N in App.1), incorporating aspects of informal register, often expressing concern, anger, or even outrage, combined with administrative language and expressions of loyalty and commitment to National Socialism (Wells 1999: 220). Wells cites the example of a *D-Brief* written by an abandoned bride in which she aligns herself with the in-group through references to the *Volksgemeinschaft* and through the use of the collective pronoun *unser*, and endeavours to contrast her perceived model behaviour with that of the perpetrator denounced in the letter (Wells 1999: 222).

The denunciation letter (App. 5) provides further evidence of the combination of private and public/ideological typical of this text-type. It is not stated whether the author of the letter is a member of a National Socialist community of practice, but in order to further her particular cause, she temporarily becomes a member and, indeed, a participant in the community of practice defined by the activity of denunciation. This may constitute a loose grouping, but, as with other examples, the defining factors of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire are present. A performance of National Socialist loyalty is communicated through the author's inclusion of herself in the in-group, seen through references to *unseren Führer*, which occurs three times, and through expressions such as *zu unseren Führer halten* and *den Krieg gewinnen*. As outlined above, the letter contains a combination of registers and does not adhere to the usual formal characteristics of a letter. There is no opening salutation, introductory sentence or closing greeting. The text contains grammatical errors, for example the use of *das* rather than *dass* as a subordinating conjunction. Characteristics typical of the spoken register are also employed, for example, *schrecklich gegen unseren Führer*, colloquial expressions, such as *um den Tommy zu hören*, *Engländischennachrichten*, and elliptical forms, e.g. *raus schmeissen*. The syntax is also informal, with elliptical sentences: *Frau M aus Wut weil ...* and *Möchte bitten ...*. The text signals personal enthusiasm for the National Socialist cause, whilst furthering what appears to be a personal feud, but it also has a further function, in exposing the addressee(s) of the letter to oppositional discourse. The rebellious utterances of the supposed perpetrator(s) are paraphrased (*raus schmeissen soll man ihn, Jetzt sagte Frau M mir das Hitler den Krieg nicht gewinnen kann, nur verlängern*), as evidence of the threat they pose to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The author is not only emphasising her loyalty and commitment by contrasting her own sentiments with those of the denounced individuals, she is also temporarily forging a connection between loyal and oppositional discourses.

The expressions of ideological solidarity in the letter reflect those found in Connelly's 1997 analysis of letters written to the *NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach*. In his study, Connelly highlights the performative nature of the language employed, with ideologically significant formulations and expressions explicitly included in the texts. He concludes from his analysis

that although members of the population did not necessarily internalise NS ideology, they were aware of the need to externalise it, and often did so to further their own causes, even though most of them were not members of the *NSDAP* (Connelly 1997: 182). He even suggests that in order to secure the goodwill or support of the *Kreisleiter*, the letter writers indulged in a greater show of ideological solidarity than was actually demanded in the context, a display of what he refers to as 'anticipatory compliance (vorausseilender Gehorsam)', which ensured the perpetuation of NS ideology more effectively than the party itself could ever have achieved (Connelly 1997: 183–183). This concept of anticipatory compliance is particularly significant for understanding the maintenance of NS discourse. The perpetuation and widespread usage of the discourse were not solely dependent on control of the media and repression of oppositional discourses. These analyses of letters written provide an obvious example of engagement with NS discourse and performance of National Socialist identities, in most instances for personal gain. The letters themselves form part of an interactive, negotiating practice in the discourse, in which there is often an imbalance in power and group membership (*NSDAP*, non-*NSDAP*) between participants. Through the interactive practices inherent in correspondence, the letter writer (the non-*NSDAP*, less powerful participant) creates the discourse in his or her own text, signalling membership of the larger NS community of practice, thereby participating in the wider NS discourse and in doing so reinforcing its existence and legitimacy.

## 5 Conclusion

The perpetuation of the discourse from the 1920s to 1945, and in particular from 1933 to 1945, was dependent on its creation and replication in a variety of spheres, by members, followers of the *NSDAP*, as well as others in the German population. In analysing linguistic participation through the concepts of communities of practice and performance of National Socialist identity, it becomes clear that the dual categories of *Sprache im* and *des Nationalsozialismus*, as defined by von Polenz (1999: 547), are too rigid to reflect the variety and malleability of the discourse. National Socialist discourse resulted from the interaction within and between a variety of communities of practice, each displaying heterogeneous markers, but also some homogeneity through the *Signalfunktion* of the utterance or text, either through textual, stylistic, lexical or thematic solidarity, or a combination of all of these factors. The blend of obvious ideological or administrative rhetoric with other discourses in the five texts analysed in this article highlights the lexical, stylistic and textual multiplicity and malleability of National Socialist discourse. These texts can be categorised both as *Sprache im* and *des Nationalsozialismus*. Through the process of *Gleichschaltung* in the public sphere, the National Socialists established their hegemonic status in the speech community, resulting, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, in diversification and fragmentation, consisting of communities of practice with a variety of willing, less willing and unwilling participants in NS discourse. The level of interaction of the individual and community of practice would often have been dependent on circumstance and would not necessarily have been consistent over a period of time. Although the aim of the National Socialists was undoubtedly to homogenise public and political discourse and they succeeded in silencing overtly oppositional discourses, this did not bring about the establishment of two separate speech communities, consisting of the National Socialists on the one hand and the population on the other. Rather there existed a complex network of communicative situations, levels of discourse, which engaged with National Socialism to a lesser or greater degree. The variety and number of texts produced within National Socialism by members of the *NSDAP*, participants in NS organisations, members of the public engaging with the National Socialist movement or state ensured the continuation of the discourse and reinforced its legitimacy and hegemonic status. Thus, whether participation was voluntary or coerced, powerful or powerless, the discourse was essentially a collective effort.

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## Appendix 1

### Anlage 6

Aktenauszug über A. B.

A. B., geb. ---.191X in ----.

A. wurde am XX.X.1935 unserem Haus H-H zugeführt.

Vorgeschichte: Auszug aus den Fürsorgeerziehungsakten. Eltern geschieden, Mutter trieb sich viel herum, Vater 19XX an Tb. gestorben.

1933 kam A. zur Erziehung nach K.

Bericht über A. von dort: stark debil, schwer erziehbar, sehr jähzornig, geistiger Rückgang. Führung sehr wechselnd, frech, asozial, schwatzhaft, affekterregbar, Psychopath, lügt viel. Angeborener Schwachsinn.

Heimbericht: bei uns dieselben Schwierigkeiten.

Bericht des Herrn Dr. P, psych. Berater der Mädchenerziehungsheime: "A.B., geb. ---.191X leidet an angeborenem Schwachsinn.

1. Diagnose: Degenrativ-minderwertige und umweltgeschädigte affekterregbare, in gewissem Grade einsichtige aber haltlose, debile Psychopathin.

2. Eltern geschieden. Mutter nach Angabe des Vaters viel herumgetrieben, vernachlässigte die häusliche Arbeit, gab sich mit fremden Männern ab. Vater an Tbc. gestorben."

X.X.1935 ins K. Krankenhaus zwecks Sterilisierung.

X.X.1936 A. versuchsweise in Dienst zu C. D., ----.

X.X.1936 Anruf von Frau F: Sie könne A. nicht behalten, weil sie lungenkrank sei, huste grüllend usw. Auch sonst genüge A. nicht, sie könne keine Arbeit behalten, sei äusserst langsam und schmutzig in der Arbeit und sehr mannstoll, spräche jeden Mann an.

.....

X.X.1936 A. aus dem Krankenhaus zurückgeholt. Es war kein Befund festzustellen. Die Schwester klagte sehr über As Benehmen, hat Klatschereien gemacht, die Männer angesprochen, der Wärter u. auch einige Patienten hätten sich beschwert.

Ich habe dann A. mit zu G. genommen, damit sie ihre Sachen packen sollte. Dort wurde sie auf Vorhaltung wegen ihrer Klatschereien und wegen der Führung unverschämt frech, so dass ich ihr in Gegenwart von Frau und Herr G. eine Backpfeife gegeben habe.

gez. Schw. N N



[App. 6

Extract concerning A. B.

A. B., b. ---.191X in ----.

A. was placed in our H-H home on XX.X.1935

Previous history: Extract from the social care files. Parents divorced, mother never at home, father died from TB in 19XX.

1933 A. was sent to K. to be educated.

Report concerning A. from there: extremely unstable, very difficult, very aggressive, mentally regressed. Very unpredictable behaviour, insolent, asocial, over-talkative, easily excitable, psychopathic, frequently tells lies.

Inherited mental illness.

Report from H-H: same problems observed here.

Report by Dr P., psychiatrist at the care home for girls: "A.B., b. ---.191X suffers from inherited mental illness.

1. Diagnosis: psychopathic: degenerative, defective, disturbed by background and upbringing, easily excitable; some sense of understanding, but uncontrollable and unstable.

2. Parents divorced. According to the father, mother never at home, neglected housework, slept with other men. Father died from TB."

X.X.1935 K. Hospital for sterilisation.

X.X.1936 A. sent to work at C.D., ---- on a trial basis.


X.X.1936 Telephone call from Mrs F: she couldn't keep A. on because she [A.] had problems with her lungs, chesty cough, etc. In addition A. wasn't satisfactory, she couldn't keep a job because she was extremely slow and messy in her work and extremely man-mad, spoke to every man.

.....

X.X.1936 A. brought back from hospital. No illness detected. The nurse complained about A's behaviour; she had gossiped, started talking to men; the guards and some of the patients made a complaint about her. I then took A. to G., so that she could pack her belongings. Whilst there, she became aggressive when confronted about her gossiping behaviour, and she complained about how she had been treated. She was so incredibly rude that I had to give her a slap across the face in the presence of Mr and Mrs G.


signed Sister. N N]

## Appendix 2




2615

Die Deutsche  
Gaut  
Arbeitsfront



**Dein KdF-Wagen**



**Die Deutsche Arbeitsfront**  
NSD. „Kraft durch Freude“  
Gau 20d - Hannover - Braunschweig  
Hannover - Nikolaistraße 7

**Betrifft: Bestellnummer für Ihren KdF-Wagen**

Sie haben für den von Ihnen bestellten KdF-Wagen die Gau-Bestellnummer 4573 erhalten. Diese Nummer ist für die Auslieferung des KdF-Wagens innerhalb unseres Gau'es maßgebend.

Die laufende Zahlung bis zur Höhe des Gesamt-Kaufpreises einschließlich Versicherungsprämie darf durch die Mitteilung der Bestellnummer keinesfalls eingestellt werden, wenn Sie sich die erworbenen Anrechte auf rechtzeitige Belieferung erhalten wollen. Wir weisen hierauf höflich nachdrücklichst hin.

Wir bitten, die 4. Sparte, sobald die Felder mit den Sparmarken besetzt sind, umgehend zur Ablieferung zu bringen. Auch die 5. Sparte kann, sobald diese die entsprechenden Marktwerte für den Rest-Kaufpreis einschließlich Versicherung enthält, gegen Quittung abgeliefert werden.

Heil Hitler!

*Tobias*  
Gauwagenswart

[Your StJ ('Strength-through-Joy)-Car

The German Labour Front

NSA ('National Socialist Association') "Strength through Joy"

South District – Hanover – Brunswick

Hanover – 7, Nikolai Street

Re: Order Number for your StJ-Car

You have received the district order number 4593 for your StJ-Car. This number is very important for the delivery of the StJ-Car within our district.

If you wish to receive prompt delivery of your car, please ensure that the payments are continued until you have paid the final purchase price including the insurance premium. Under no circumstances should payment stop because you have received the order number.

We request that you send us the 4th savings card, as soon as it is complete with saving stamps. The 5th savings card can also be submitted, for which you will receive a receipt, as soon as this is completed to the sum of the remaining purchase price including insurance.

Long live Hitler!

Tobies

District Car Officer]

**Appendix 3**

Der Oberpräsident

Hannover N. den 7. März 1939

Der Provinz Hannover

Am Schiffgraben 6

(Verwaltung des Provinzialverbandes)

Fernspr. 5 14 11

- Landesobmann -

Gesch.Z.: 47/1684/22 Ki/J.

Im Antwortschreiben anzugeben

An Frau P

[Address]

Ihre Base N N

~~befindet~~ – befand – sich in der Landes-Heil-und Pflegeanstalt in Hildesheim.

Zwecks Erfassung der Sippe ~~des~~ der – Genannten bitte ich Sie um Mitteilung, ob Sie Kinder haben.

Gegebenfalls ist der anliegende Fragebogen auszufüllen. Auch etwa uneheliche oder verstorbene Kinder sind aufzuführen. ~~Sollten bereits Enkelkinder vorhanden sein, bitte ich Sie, diese mit in den Fragebogen über die Kinder einzutragen und dabei zu vermerken, zu welchem der Kinder die Enkel gehören.~~

Da die Angaben zu erbbiologischen Erhebungen benötigt werden, bitte ich Sie - auch zur Vermeidung von Rückfragen und Erinnerungen – um sorgfältige und umgehende Erledigung dieses Schreibens.

Einen freigemachten Briefumschlag füge ich zur gefl. Benutzung bei.

Sollten Ihnen außer dem Krankheitsfall ~~des~~ – der – Obengenannten noch andere schwere Krankheiten (Erbkrankheiten) – insbesondere Geisteskrankheiten (auch Trunksucht), geistige und charakterliche Eigenarten – in Ihrer Sippe bekannt sein, bitte ich, diese Fälle namhaft zu machen.

Außerdem werden Sie noch um die Beantwortung nachstehender Fragen gebeten:

- ~~1) Wann sind Sie selbst geboren?~~
- ~~2) Wo sind Sie selbst geboren?~~
- ~~3) Wann haben Sie die Ehe geschlossen?~~
- ~~4) Wo haben Sie die Ehe geschlossen?~~
- ~~5) Mit wem haben Sie die Ehe geschlossen?~~

Welche Hausnummer haben Sie?

Auf Anordnung:  
(Signature)

[The President  
Province of Hanover  
(Administrative headquarters of  
the provincial association)

N. Hanover, 7th March 1939  
6, Am Schiffgraben  
Tel. 5 14 11

- Chairman -

Ref. no.: 47/1684/22 Ki/J.

Please quote in correspondence

Mrs P  
[Address]

Your cousin N N

~~Is receiving treatment~~ – was receiving treatment – at the state sanatorium in Hildesheim.

For the purposes of registering the blood kin of the above-named person, I would be grateful if you could inform me whether you have children.

If this is the case, you are requested to fill out the accompanying questionnaire. Illegitimate or deceased children should also be listed. ~~Should you also have grandchildren, please list them in the questionnaire about your children, noting which grandchildren belong to which child.~~

As this information will be used for biological, hereditary purposes, I would ask you to fill out the questionnaire as promptly and as carefully as possible – to avoid any queries or reminders.

Please find enclosed a stamped addressed envelope for your convenience.

If you are aware of any other cases of serious illness in your blood kin other than that of the above-mentioned person, (hereditary illnesses) – in particular mental illnesses (including alcoholism), mental or character peculiarities, would you please make them known.

In addition, we require the following information from you:

~~1) When were you born?~~

~~2) Where were you born?~~

~~3) When did you marry?~~

~~4) Where did you marry?~~

~~5) Whom did you marry?~~

What is your house number?

By the authority of

(Signature)]

#### **Appendix 4**

##### Abschrift

L N

P, den 11.2.1944

P/Mecklb.

(Street name and number)

An den

Reichsführer-SS-Persönlicher Stab-

z.Hd. des SS-Obersturmbannführer C,

Berlin SW 11

Prinz-Albrecht-Str.8

Sehr geehrter SS-Obersturmbannführer C!

Ihr Schreiben vom 27.12.1943 mit den Glückwünschen des Reichsführer-SS zur Geburt unseres dritten Kriegeskindes hat mich außerordentlich erfreut. Der Lebensleuchter für die kleine H ist heil angekommen, auch die 6 kleinen Flaschen Vitabornsäfte sind inzwischen angelangt. Sprechen Sie bitte dem Reichsführer-SS meinen wärmsten Dank, auch im Namen meines Mannes, für all das Gute aus.

Als Anerkennung lege ich die letzte Familienaufnahme bei, die mein Mann am Julfest 1943 machte. Sie sehen hierauf drei glückliche zufriedene Mädels, unsere G, geb. X.X.40, D, geb. X.X.42 und H, geb. X.X.43.

Wenn es auch jetzt im 5. Kriegsjahr schwierig ist, die kleinen Kinder aufzuziehen, so kann doch jede Mutter bei gutem Willen zurechtkommen. Dazu gehört vor allem ein gläubiges Herz. Es ist mir klar, daß unsere Führung alles Menschenmögliche macht, um die vielen jungen Mütter zufriedenzustellen. Aber der totale Krieg kennt heute nur eine Lösung: "Alles für den Sieg." Sieht man sich überhaupt den Führer und seine tapferen Soldaten an, dann wagt man gar nicht, die eigenen Schwierigkeiten beim Namen zu nennen, so klein sind diese dagegen. – Eine besondere Freude macht es mir, Ihnen sagen zu können, daß der Wille zum Kind hier in Mecklenburg immer festeren Boden gewinnt. Aus eigenem Erleben will ich hierzu anführen:

Als gerade an meinem 18. Geburtstag unser erstes Kind geboren wurde (kurz vor Kriegsausbruch haben wir geheiratet), hörte ich von vielen jüngeren und älteren Bekannten nur die Antwort: "Warum schon so früh mit Kindern anfangen. Sie haben ja noch nichts vom Leben gehabt!" Für viele Bekannte war es dann einfach unfassbar, daß bald darauf das 2. Kind kam. Was bekam ich alles zu hören. "Ich sollte mich lieber schonen, ich wäre noch zu jung, ich soll doch erst lieber das Leben genießen usw." Anstatt mir das Herz zu erleichtern, erschwerten sie es mir. Ganz anders jetzt beim dritten Kind. Keiner sagte mir etwas, im Gegenteil. Auch haben in der Zwischenzeit mehrere Bekannte das 2. Kind bekommen oder sich zum 2. Kind entschlossen. Man hat eben im Laufe des Krieges doch eingesehen, daß es etwas Wertvolleres als eine gesunde Kinderschar überhaupt nicht geben kann.

Recht herzliche Grüße und

Heil Hitler !

Ihre

L N

[Copy

L N

P, 11.2.1944

P/Mecklb.

(Street name and number)

Reich Leader SS Personal Headquarters

F.A.O SS-First Lieutenant C,

Berlin SW 11

8 Prinz Albrecht St.

Dear SS-First Lieutenant C!

I was very delighted to receive your letter of 27.12.1943, with the message from the Reich Leader of the SS congratulating us on the birth of our third war child. The life candlestick for little H arrived safely, as did the 6 little bottles of baby vitamin juice. Please convey our most grateful thanks, also on behalf of my husband, for the kind gesture.

As a token of thanks I have enclosed the most recent photograph of the family, taken by my husband at the Yuletide celebrations, 1943. In the photo you will see three happy, contented girls, our G, born on the X.X.40; D, born X.X.42 and H, born X.X.43.

Even if, in the fifth year of the war, it is difficult bringing up small children, with a bit of determination, every mother can get by. All that is needed is a faithful heart. I am sure that our leadership is doing everything in its power to ensure that all the young mothers are happy and contented. But there is only one answer for the total war: "victory first." One only needs to look at the Leader and his brave soldiers, then one doesn't dare mention one's own problems, as they seem so petty by comparison. – I am particularly pleased to be able to tell you that the desire for a child is growing daily here in Mecklenburg. If I may illustrate from my own experience:

When our first child was born precisely on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (we married just before the war broke out), all I heard from many acquaintances, old and young alike was: "Why have children so young. You haven't had a life yourself yet!" Many of them just couldn't believe it when the second child came along soon after. You can't imagine what I was told. "I should really take it easy, I was too young, I should really enjoy life first, etc." Instead of making me feeling better, they only make things worse. The reactions are very different now with the third child. No one passes comment, quite the opposite. In the meantime several acquaintances have also had a second child or decided to have a second one. It seems as if they have realised in the course of the war that there is nothing more valuable than a healthy brood of children.

With very best wishes and

long live Hitler!

Yours,

L N]

## Appendix 5

### Briefumschlag:

Adressiert an: Polizei-Revier 23 [...]

Da ich eine gute Bekannte Frau Ms bin möchte ich Ihnen mitteilen, das [sic] diese und F N schrecklich gegen unsern Führer sind. Um den Tommy zu hören um 10 1/2 Uhr wie ich es gewahr geworden bin von denen selbst spielen sie Karten um Geld, das es ihnen nicht so lange wird, bis die Nachrichten kommen. Als am 1. Mai vor einem Jahr in der Wirtschaft S. das Führerbild geschmückt werden sollte, raus schmeissen soll man ihn, sagte M und schimpfen jetzt auch beide noch auf unsern Führer. Frau M aus Wut weil ihr einziger Sohn Soldat ist, und N weil ihre Mutter durch Bomben umgekommen ist. Möchte bitten ihnen das zu verbieten weiter zu erzählen was in den Engländischennachrichten gelogen wird. Der Sender wird ständig bei K gehört, Frau K es ihrer Schwester F N und Fr. M oft verbietet weil sie ängstlich ist. Jetzt sagte Frau M mir das Hitler den Krieg nicht gewinnen kann, nur verlängern. Ich kann das nicht länger mit anhören, bin noch sehr jung, und möchte doch auch das wir alle zu unseren Führer halten, und den Krieg gewinnen. Bitte räumen Sie bei K in der Wohnung mal auf, Fr. K ist unschuldig, es sind nur die beiden.

[Addresses of Fr M and F N listed.]

[Envelope:

Addressed to: Police Station 23

As I know Mrs M well I would like to inform you that she and F N really don't like our Leader. As they told me themselves they listen to the Tommy at 10.30 and they play cards for money so that time doesn't drag before the news comes on. On 1<sup>st</sup> May when the picture of the Leader was supposed to be decorated in the S Pub, M said we should turf him out and the both of them have a go at our Leader. Mrs M because she's angry seeing as her only son is a soldier, and N because her mother was killed by bombs. Would request that you forbid them to pass on the lies from the Englishish [sic] news. They always listen to the programme at K's, Mrs K often stops her sister F N and Mrs M because she's afraid. Now Mrs M says that Hitler can't win the war any more, only let it drag on. I can't bear to listen to this anymore, am still very young and want us all to support our Leader and win the war. Please sort out these goings-on in K's flat, Mrs K is innocent, it's only the other two.]